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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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DEPT FOR DRL/SEA

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [TH](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: RESPONSE - FOLLOWING UP ON THE ACTIVISTS FOR
DEMOCRACY AND DISSIDENTS OUTREACH REQUEST

REF: A. STATE 44903

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[1](#)1. (U) Embassy Bangkok and Consulate General Chiang Mai have maintained regular contact with Burmese democracy and human rights activists living in Thailand since they first began escaping to Thailand in the late 1980s. With an estimated 200 Burma democracy movement organizations working in Kanchanaburi, Tak, Mae Hong Son, Chiang Mai, and Chiang Rai provinces, as well as Bangkok, the Ambassador and other mission officials make a point of personally meeting these dissidents and democracy activists to demonstrate the USG's commitment to advancing freedom and democracy. In addition, the Ambassador and his staff frequently arrange for and accompany senior officials from Washington -- up to the Assistant Secretary level -- to meetings with a broad range of Burmese exiles. Based in Thailand, the Burmese exile media plays an important role in countering the propaganda broadcast by Burma's state controlled media and promoting dialogue about Burma's political situation. Recognizing this, the Ambassador and other mission officials offer interviews and organize briefings for the exile media, including events with Rangoon's Chief of Mission when they are in Bangkok.

[1](#)2. (U) In November 2007, the Ambassador hosted a meeting between A/S Silverberg and leaders from a Burmese women's organization, numerous political activists, and the exile media. In December 2007, the Ambassador helped arrange a unique opportunity for the First Lady to speak with world renowned health care worker and Burma activist Dr. Cynthia Maung via video conference, which was covered by local and international press based in Washington and Bangkok. Later that same month the Ambassador gave an exclusive interview to the widely acclaimed Burmese exile news outlet The Irrawaddy. In January 2008 the Ambassador held a roundtable discussion with several leading activists in Chiang Mai in order to exchange views about the prospects for democratic transition

in Burma.

¶3. (U) The Ambassador continues to encourage the RTG to share Thailand's own democratic experiences with Burma's leaders. In meetings with government officials, the Ambassador also recognizes the RTG's tacit support of the activists' work that is largely based in Thailand and the Thai government's willingness to maintain substantial refugee camps for the thousands of ethnic minorities fleeing fighting in Burma.

¶4. (U) For detailed reports of these meetings and events, please see reftels B - S.

¶5. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate General Chiang Mai.
JOHN